



January 8, 2021

Mayor Erin Mendenhall

via Jamie Stokes, Community Liaison

Mayor Mendenhall,

The redevelopment of Lamplighter Square (1615 South Foothill Drive) has great impact, interest, and implications for the East Bench community. We have heard from the developers of the property for years and seen several plans for the property that we have been excited about. We've been told that we would have a voice in the plans that were ultimately executed. We look forward to the investment in our neighborhood by the owners and new and old tenants.

The East Bench Community Council meeting held on November 18th, 2020 demonstrated the community's concerns and public engagement. The virtual meeting generated such interest that it locked at full capacity (100 screens) before the meeting began and stayed full even with asking families to share screens. The vote tally of members who could join the call resulted in an 80% vote against rezoning the area, including an existing residential lot into the project, and a significant objection to the plan presented that day for a five-story, 135-unit apartment building.

With three acres of developable land, the re-development of Lamplighter Square offers an opportunity to create an asset in a community that already is lacking in public options for gathering and entertainment. Currently, the options for the entire EBCC geography for sit down dining and amenities, are very limited: Red Robin and Taqueria 27. Lamplighter Square is the last real business district in the EBCC. A business district serves as a place for the community to meet, dine, and have an entertainment option. Another small business district on the west side of Foothill Drive which housed Cowboy Grub, Davanza's Pizza, and a ski shop was re-developed by at least one of the partners of Lamplighter Square in the last five years and replaced with a four-story chain hotel and a popular drive-through coffee shop. We would not like to see another (our last!) community asset and gathering place disappear to make room for maximum density in an area it does not fit.

Scale:

The East Bench Master Planning document establishes a vision for how a community should look, feel, and function in the future. Lamplighter Square falls into the “community node” area as established by the map on pg 67. The community node has specific criteria that new developments are supposed to meet.

- Building height should be two to three stories
- Respect the existing character of adjacent residential neighborhoods
- Primary automobile access to development should be from Foothill Drive to discourage additional traffic in the adjacent neighborhoods
- Provide active uses and design features at the street level to encourage social interaction and create a sense of place

The proposed plan and the developers disregard these guiding principles. The proposal shows five floors, the character of the neighborhood is not considered, the developers hope to incorporate an existing single-family home into the project, eliminate views on Skyline Drive (the very name of the street!), and create a new road/primary entrance and exit for the development onto a residential street (1700 South).

Zoning:

The project area is made up of multiple parcels consisting of Community Business (CB), Neighborhood Commercial District (CN), and residential (R1-7000). Over the years the developers have been acquiring the surrounding parcels, with the intention of consolidating into one rezoned parcel with higher density. In the past they have spoken to the community council and stated that if the community did not want them to acquire the single-family home to the east of the project they would not. That property at 2493 E 1700 S is under contract for purchase by the developers and their development proposal includes demolition of the home and use of the land as a driveway.

Earlier in 2020, the developers did a subdivision without the city’s knowledge in order to sell the land to Utah DABC. The Planning department indicated that they were unaware, and had the city attorney look at how this was completed without their knowledge. It was determined that it was not a legal subdivision and if a private citizen had taken the action it would have been undone; however, the city does not have the option to make the state undo the subdivision (much like the inland port annexation). This action by the developers carved out a large portion of the project from their ownership and created the requirement to provide easements to the state over developer land to serve the new DABC building. Further, they were left with a more challenging configuration of parcels left to develop. They are now raising the challenges of developing the project with the current CN zoning; however, they sold off the large section of the CB zone to the state and were paid for that land. It is our fear that the state’s involvement will allow the developers to circumvent city code as the state requires easement on the developer’s land to serve the property.

The CN zone, as is established by SLC Code, is intended to provide for small scale, low intensity commercial uses that can be located within and serve residential neighborhoods. This district is appropriate in areas where they are supported by applicable master plans and along local streets that are served by multiple transportation modes, such as pedestrian, bicycle, transit and automobiles. The standards for the district are intended to reinforce the historic scale and ambiance of traditional neighborhood retail that is

oriented toward the pedestrian while ensuring adequate transit and automobile access. Uses are restricted in size to promote local orientation and to limit adverse impacts on nearby residential areas.

Both the master plan and city code establish this criterion, and the community wish that the CN zoning standards be applied.

Traffic:

The intersection of 1700 South and Foothill Drive is one of only four in our geography to access Foothill Drive with traffic light control. The intersection is only 40 ft from the curb cut of the Skyline Inn on 1700 South. That driveway currently only serves the small parking lot (19 spaces!) for the hotel. We are very concerned that the new development, whether it includes the proposed density of housing or not, will dramatically increase the flow of traffic onto our neighborhood streets. We expressed concern (born of experience and history) about that curb cut being open to the whole project, that cars would turn onto 1700 S and then use Wasatch Drive or other neighborhood streets to finish their routing, and the developer's representative said it wouldn't happen, that it would be silly for cars to go that way, but it's exactly what has happened all along Wasatch Drive. The East Bench is already becoming locked in during rush hour as cars pile in intersections. The inclusion of 1700 S in the development not only goes against the standards established in the East Bench Master Plan, but will also severely impact the surrounding neighbors and anyone in the neighborhood who relies on this intersection to safely navigate Foothill Drive.

Housing:

Lamplighter Square has 18 apartment units and 20 hotel rooms. It is well known that housing supply in the city is not keeping up with demand; however, there are more appropriate places to add very dense housing.

The Foothill corridor currently has a major multi-family component with Foothill Place apartments (800+ unit), Foothill Terrace apartments (150 units adjacent to Lamplighter Square), and others. The future plan for U of U Research Park and University Village will also see thousands more housing units added to the stock of the area.

In order for high density multi-family projects to be successfully incorporated into a community, they need to be anchored by certain criteria such as: recreational activity, walkability, and not needing to get in your car every time you need something.

The closest park to Lamplighter Square is Donner Park, two miles away up the hills of the East Bench, and the closest grocery store is ¾ miles north and across Foothill Drive, a treacherous walk any time of year. The area is already lacking amenities and it is getting more common to have to get in your car and drive to another business district for basic needs. The additional traffic of 135 housing units will have an adverse effect on the surrounding homes, specifically those on 1700 S and Skyline Drive, and anyone who travels those roads to get home from an already majorly congested Foothill Drive.

Community Opinion:

The consensus of the November meeting was that the project was not acceptable to the neighborhood, did not fit into the East Bench Master Plan, and showed a disregard for the impact on the community. We ask that the future development consider the concerns of the community in regarding scale, the lack of recreational/leisure opportunity in the area, the adverse impacts of majorly increased traffic flow onto 1700 South, the visual impact on all the view homes above it, and the elimination of a community asset and gathering place.

In Conclusion:

We would like to see this as a neighborhood gathering place and amenity, not just a regional destination center. We also ask that additional vehicular traffic stemming from redevelopment of this site not flow onto neighborhood streets as set forth in the East Bench Master Planning documents. It is our fear that the state's involvement will allow the developers to circumvent city code as the state requires easement on the developer's land to serve the property which will push traffic circulation onto residential streets. We want to make all efforts to ensure that does not happen. Increasing the scale and density of this project serves only to enrich the developers at the detriment of the surrounding community. If the developers choose to use this space for maximum density, or highest rents without regard to the fit to the community, please at least ensure that the existing zoning and codes are applied to this property to the letter.

Thank you sincerely for your time and attention,

Aimee Burrows, Chair
East Bench Community Council
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See Also:

EBCC November 18, 2020 Meeting Minutes [ebcc-minutes-11.18.20-3.pdf \(wordpress.com\)](#)

EBCC November 18, 2020 Zoom Meeting recording: <https://youtu.be/vNQHLU0NqUI>

East Bench Master Plan: [LINK]

CC:

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